

Message Text

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ACTION ORM-02

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 DHA-02 SCA-01 VO-03

CIAE-00 FBIE-00 INSE-00 NSAE-00 NEA-10 AID-05 /049 W

----- 037358

R 161320Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5563

USMISSION GENEVA

INFO AMEMBASSY ROME

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 1 OF 2 ATHENS 7213

DEPARTMENT FOR D/HA AND SCA

ROME FOR FALCHER

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SREF

SUBJECT: ARMENIAN AND ASSYRIAN REFUGEES PROGRAM--

FINAL REPORT

1. SUMMARY. THE FOLLOWING IS FINAL ROUND-UP ON THE EMERGENCY PROGRAM TO DOCUMENT ASSYRIAN AND ARMENIAN REFUGEES EVACUATED FROM LEBANON TO GREECE. IT INCLUDES A BRIEF COMMENTARY ON THE OPERATION, NOTING WHAT IS CONSIDERED TO HAVE BEEN AN UNFORTUNATE DECISION (I.E., INITIALLY SPLIT OF THE OPERATION INTO BEIRUT AND ATHENS PHASES) AND WHAT HAS BEEN THE SINGLE GREATEST SOURCE OF DIFFICULTY (VIZ., THE DIFFERENCE IN INS AND UNHCR DEFINITIONS OF QUOTE REFUGEE UNQUOTE WHICH HAS LED TO NUMEROUS REJECTIONS FOR CONDITIONAL ENTRY BY INS OF UNHCR-MANDATED PERSONS). END SUMMARY.

2. STATISTICS TO DATE:

CONDITIONAL ENTRY APPLICANTS PRESENTED 1,254

NONPREFERENCE IMMIGRANT VISA APPLICANTS

PRESENTED (SPOUSES AND MINOR CHILDREN OF

THE ABOVE-CITED 1,254 PERSONS) 1,091

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TOTAL INDIVIDUALS PRESENTED	2,345

CONDITIONAL ENTRANTS APPROVED BY INS	1,070
NONPREFERENCE IMMIGRANT VISAS ISSUED TO SPOUSES AND CHILDREN	984

TOTAL INDIVIDUALS DOCUMENTED	2,094
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INS CASES PENDING APPROVAL	11
NONPREFERENCE IMMIGRANT CASES PENDING (SPOUSES AND CHILDREN OF THE ABOVE)	24

TOTAL CASES PENDING	35
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NONPREFERENCE APPLICANTS REFUSED UNDER:

SECTION 212(A)(1) - MENTAL RETARDATION	2
SECTION 212(A)(6) - TUBERCULOSIS, CLASS	4

TOTAL NONPREFERENCE REFUSALS	6
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(REQUESTS FOR WAIVER OF INELIGIBILITY
HAVE BEEN MADE FOR ALL SIX. FAMILY
GROUPS COMPRISING 16 INDIVIDUALS IN
ALL ARE BEING HELD UP PENDING OUTCOME
OF THE SIX WAIVER REQUESTS.)

CONDITIONAL ENTRY APPLICANTS REJECTED AT ATHENS BY INS	173
SPOUSES AND CHILDREN OF THE ABOVE	77

TOTAL	250
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(THESE ARE APPLICANTS INTERVIEWED AND
REJECTED IN ATHENS: THE FIGURE DOES NOT
INCLUDE APPLICANTS PREVIOUSLY REJECTED
BY INS IN LEBANON, MANY OF WHOM ARE NOW IN
GREECE, HAVING BEEN BROUGHT HERE BY THE
VOLAGS ALONG WITH THE OTHER EVACUEES.)

3. EMBASSY ATHENS WAS BROUGHT INTO THE REFUGEE PROGRAM
IN FEBRUARY 1976, WHEN IT WAS DECIDED BY UNHCR AND THE
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VOLUNTARY AGENCIES TO EVACUATE THE REFUGEES FROM
BEIRUT, FOR PROCESSING AT ATHENS. HOWEVER, UNHCR,
THE VOLUNTARY AGENCIES, AND INS ALSO MADE DECISION TO
CONTINUE TO PROCESS AT BEIRUT, WHILE BRINGING THE BULK
OF THE REFUGEES TO ATHENS. IT WAS AGREED THAT FOR THE PURPOSE
OF PROCESSING THE REFUGEES AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE, THE
EMBASSIES AT BEIRUT AND ATHENS WERE TO CONSIDER
AS NON PREFERENCE VISA APPLICANTS THE SPOUSES

AND MINOR CHILDREN OF REFUGEES ACCORDED CONDITIONAL ENTRY
BY INS.

ADDITIONAL REFUGEE PROCESSING WAS ATTEMPTED IN BEIRUT
DURING MARCH BUT WAS SOON DISCONTINUED OWING TO THE
SECURITY SITUATION. IN THE MEANTIME, MARCH 15
WORK AT ATHENS ON INTERVIEWS, MEDICAL EXAMINATIONS,
AND CLEARANCES HAD BEGUN. WITH UP TO 90 PRESENTATIONS
BY VOLAGS DAILY, IT WAS ESTIMATED THAT EMBASSY INTERVIEWS,
MEDICAL EXAMS, AND CLEARANCES WOULD BE COMPLETED, OR
VIRTUALLY SO, BY APRIL 22. SUBSEQUENTLY, DESPITE SOME
DIFFICULTIES, OVERCOME BY COOPERATION AND HARD WORK,
EMBASSY PROCESSING OF FAMILY MEMBERS, AS NONPREFERENCE
IV APPLICANTS WAS COMPLETED BY THE TARGET DATE. INS
CONTINUED MAKING APPROVALS AS RAPIDLY AS POSSIBLE,
AND, BY MAY 15, THE WHOLE OPERATION WAS ESSENTIALLY
COMPLETE, SAVE FOR SOME LATE-COMING STRAGGLERS, THOSE
PENDING APPROVAL OF APPLICATIONS FOR WAIVERS, AND THOSE
REFUGEES REFUSED AND WHO ARE NOW APPEALING
REJECTIONS TO INS ROME.

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ACTION ORM-02

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 DHA-02 SCA-01 VO-03

CIAE-00 FBIE-00 INSE-00 NSAE-00 NEA-10 AID-05 /049 W

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R 161320Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5564
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INFO AMEMBASSY ROME

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4. HINDSIGHT, WITH THE BENEFIT OF KNOWING NOW THAT
FIGHTING CONTINUED WITH VERY FEW PAUSES IN LEBANON,

DEMONSTRATES THAT EFFORTS SHOULD HAVE BEEN CONCENTRATED ON EVACUATING ALL OF THE REFUGEES MUCH SOONER THAN WAS DONE. THE DECISION TO ATTEMPT SIMULTANEOUS PROCESSING AT BEIRUT WAS PREDICATED ON HOPES FOR MONETARY SAVINGS TO UNHCR. HOWEVER, IT IS DOUBTFUL THAT THE PROGRESS MADE ON PROCESSING IN BEIRUT WAS WORTH THE SAVINGS, ESPECIALLY IN VIEW OF DANGER AND DIFFICULTY INVOLVED IN PROCESSING CASES THERE. OUR CONCLUSION IS THAT ANY SIMILAR OPERATION IN THE FUTURE SHOULD BE CONDUCTED IN ONE PLACE, WITH PERSONNEL RESOURCES CONCENTRATED, RATHER THAN THROUGH A SPLIT OPERATION.

5. IN ADDITION, INS ATTACHE ATHENS MAKES POINT THAT DETERMINATION OF QUALIFICATION FOR CONDITIONAL ENTRY CAN BE MADE IN A MUCH MORE ORDERLY FASHION, THAN WAS POSSIBLE DURING THE ATHENS/BEIRUT PROGRAM, AND WITH LESS TIME REQUIRED PER CASE BY INS OFFICERS AND STAFF, IF ALL PRELIMINARIES ARE COMPLETED BEFORE THE INS INTERVIEW. IF THIS IS DONE, THE FINAL DECISION CAN BE MADE IN EACH LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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CASE FOLLOWING INS INTERVIEW. DURING THE ATHENS' PROGRAM, EMBASSY AND INS INTERVIEWS AND MEDICAL EXAMINATIONS WERE COMPLETED FASTER THAN THE SMALL INS OFFICE COULD FORMALIZE NECESSARY DOCUMENTATION AND GIVE FINAL APPROVAL. IN PRACTICE THIS MEANT THAT EXTRA TIME WAS SPENT BY INS AND EMBASSY VISA STAFF RETRIEVING FILES, COLLATING THEM WITH CLEARANCE RESULTS, ETC., SUBSEQUENT TO COMPLETION OF QUALIFYING INTERVIEWS.

6. UNHCR REP HASELMAN NOTES THAT SEVERAL UNKNOWN'S HAMPERED INITIAL PLANNING AND PREPARATION: THESE WERE:

- A. EXACT SIZE OF CASELOAD WAS NOT KNOWN TO UNHCR OR TO VOLUNTARY AGENCIES. IT TURNED OUT TO BE GREATER THAN ANTICIPATED, AND UNFORTUNATELY INCLUDED GROUP OF NON-MANDATED PEOPLE (COPTIC CHRISTIANS FROM EGYPT) INELIGIBLE FOR REFUGEE STATUS, WHO SHOULD NOT HAVE BEEN BROUGHT TO ATHENS BY VOLUNTARY AGENCIES.
- B. DIFFERENCE IN DEFINITIONS OF REFUGEE USED BY INS AND UNHCR. ALSO UNHCR'S UNAWARENESS THAT PERSONS OVER 21, OR CHILDREN NOT ACCOMPANIED BY PARENT, CAN NOT BE CONSIDERED CHILDREN FOR PURPOSE QUALIFYING FOR NONPREFERENCE VISA, AS CHILD OF CONDITIONAL ENTRANT. (LATTER GAVE RISE TO VOLAG'S FAULTY ESTIMATE OF RATIO SEVENTH PREFERENCE TO NONPREFERENCE APPLICANTS AND TO ERRONEOUS ESTIMATE THAT ONLY 500 SEVENTH PREFERENCE NUMBERS WOULD BE REQUIRED.)
- C. UNHCR WAS UNAWARE OF LENGTH OF VISAS EAGLE

WAITING PERIOD (WHICH LATER WAS REDUCED ON AN AD HOC BASIS FOR THIS OPERATION).

D. UNHCR DID NOT REALIZE CONDITIONAL ENTRY DOCUMENTS ARE NORMALLY SENT TO PORT OF ENTRY IN USA SEVEN DAYS PRIOR TO ALIEN'S SCHEDULED ARRIVAL (SOLVED FOR THIS OPERATION BY AD HOC PROCEDURE INVOLVING CARRIAGE OF DOCUMENTS BY FLIGHT CREWS ON SAME AIRCRAFT WITH ALIENS).

E. UNHCR WAS UNAWARE OF TIME NEEDED BY INS TO COMPLETE PAPERWORK FOR CONDITIONAL ENTRY AFTER THE INS OFFICER APPROVED THE APPLICATION.

(PERIOD COULD HAVE BEEN SHORTENED IF INS HAD LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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BEEN PROVIDED WITH ADDITIONAL CLERICAL STAFF AND WORKING FLOOR SPACE.

F. UNHCR WAS UNAWARE THAT TRAVEL DOCUMENTS ARE NEEDED BY REFUGEES FOR TRAVEL TO USA (TRAVEL DOCUMENTS WERE PROVIDED BY INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS).

7. MEANING OF WORD QUOTE FLED UNQUOTE SEEMS TO BE PRINCIPAL REASON FOR LARGE NUMBER OF REFECTIONS BY INS OF PERSONS WHO HAD BEEN MANDATED (UNDER ALLEGEDLY VERY STRICT CRITERIA) BY UNHCR, SINCE THIS WORD APPEARS IN RELEVANT SECTION OF IMMIGRATION AND NATIONALITY ACT BUT IS NOT USED IN CONVENTION UNDER WHICH UNHCR OPERATES. EMBASSY ATHENS DOES NOT POSSESS LEGAL EXPERTISE EITHER TO DISCUSS DIFFERENCE COMPETELTLY OR TO RECOMMEND SOLUTION. HOWEVER, SINCE FACT INS AND UNHCR ARE OPERATING UNDER SLIGHTLY DIFFERING DEFINITIONS OF REFUGEE HAS CONTRIBUTED TO 173 INS REJECTIONS IN ATHENS (IN ADDITON TO THOSE PREVIOUSLY MADE IN BEIRUT), IT APPEARS THAT LEGAL EXPERTS OR OTHERWISE QUALIFIED REPRESENTATIVES OF US GOVERNMENT AND UNHCR MIGHT CONFER ON URGENT BASIS TO DISCOVER SOME MEANS BY WHICH SINGLE DEFINITION CAN BE USED BY BOTH INS AND UNHCR.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS AND COMMENTS

A. EMBASSY RECOMMENDS THAT ACTION SUGGESTED IN PARAGRAPH 7 BE TAKEN AS SOON AS POSSIBLE IN ORDER TO ENSURE THAT WORD REFUGEE MEANS PRECISELY SAME TO BOTH INS AND UNHCR, SO THAT UN-MANDATED REFUGEES WILL NOT IN FUTURE BE REFUSED AS REFUGEES BY INS FOR THIS REASON ALONE, ASSUMING UN PERSONNEL CORRECTLY APPLY PROPER CRITERIA.

B. SUGGESTION BY INS ATTACHE ATHENS, CONTAINED IN PARAGRAPH 5, IS THOUGHT BY THE EMBASSY TO HAVE MERIT, PROVIDED THERE IS TIME TO TAKE DELIBERATE

APPROACH. IN CASE OF ASSYRIAN AND ARMENIAN REFUGEE
PROCESSING AT ATHENS, CONSULAR SECTION HAD TO BEAR
IN MIND IMMINENCE OF START OF SUMMER PEAK WORKLOAD.
IN ORDER TO COPE WITH HEAVY SUMMER WORKLOAD, IT WAS
IMPERATIVE THAT VISA UNIT'S PORTION OF OPERATION BE
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COMPLETED BY END OF APRIL.
KUBISCH

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
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Draft Date: 16 JUL 1976
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